

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 12382

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MILI PARM UK ELAB
SUBJECT: RESULTS OF ONE-DAY STRIKE AGAINST UK DEFENSE
ESTABLISHMENT

REF: LONDON 12037 AND 11898

SUMMARY: APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF THE DEFENSE
MINISTRY'S INDUSTRIAL CIVIL SERVANTS (I.E., BLUE COLLAR
WORKERS) STAYED HOME YESTERDAY IN A TWENTY-FOUR
"UNOFFICIAL" STRIKE, WHICH ALSO AFFECTED SMALLER
NUMBERS OF NON-DEFENSE RELATED GOVERNMENT WORKERS. THE

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (MOD) WAS ABLE, THROUGH THE SUBSTI-
TUTION OF SERVICEMEN AND THE WILLINGNESS OF THE UNIONS
TO ALLOW SOME CIVILIANS TO PERFORM ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS,
TO AVOID ANY SERIOUS IMPACT ON OPERATIONAL DEFENSE
ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY
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1. THE MOD HAS CONFIRMED TO US PRESS REPORTS INDICATING
THAT AS MANY AS TWO-THIRDS OF THE MOD'S 120,000 CIVILIAN
MANUAL WORKERS WENT OUT YESTERDAY ON A 24-HOUR "UNOFFI-
CIAL" WORK ACTION. THIS WAS DESIGNED TO DRAMATIZE
THEIR PAY DISPUTE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE STRIKE HAD
NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON MILITARY OPERATIONS, BUT

DEFENCE-RELATED SERVICES REPORTEDLY WERE EXTENSIVELY AFFECTED; ALL OR PART OF THE CIVILIAN WORK FORCE CAME OUT IN MOST DOCKYARDS, RAF PARTS DEPOTS AND NATIONALIZED ORDINANCE FACTORIES WERE AFFECTED. AT OTHER FACILITIES WORKERS REPORTED FOR NORMAL DUTY. LOCAL DEALS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND UNION REPRESENTATIVES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN STRUCK IN A NUMBER OF INSTANCES ALLOWING A LIMITED NUMBER OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES TO CONTINUE TO PERFORM KEY SAFETY-RELATED AND OTHER FUNCTIONS. IN OTHER INSTANCES, SERVICEMEN TOOK OVER KEY OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

2. THE INDUSTRIAL CIVIL SERVANTS (WHO DO IN FACT APPEAR TO BE RELATIVELY POORLY PAID) ARE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT SEEKING WAGES COMPARABLE TO THOSE PAID FOR SIMILAR WORK IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

NATIONAL UNION OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN CLOSETED WITH GOVERNMENT MINISTERS TELL US THAT THEY APPEAR TO BE MAKING HEADWAY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, WHILE TACITLY ADMITTING THEY HAVE LITTLE CONTROL OVER THE LOCAL LEADERS, WHO HAVE IGNORED THEIR APPEALS TO HALT INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS AT DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENTS. MOD SOURCES AND PRESS REPORTS INDICATE, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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OF SOME AFFECTED UNIONS ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED AND HELPED ORGANIZE YESTERDAY'S WORK ACTION.

3. ALTHOUGH WORKERS HAVE RETURNED TO THE JOB AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ONE-DAY STRIKE, SELECTIVE WORK ACTIONS, INCLUDING THE "BLACKING" OF THE BRITISH SSBN FLEET, CONTINUE. THIS "BLACKING" HAS SLOWED BUT NOT STOPPED WORK ON THE TWO POLARIS SUBMARINES CURRENTLY LAID UP IN THE ROSYTH DOCKYARD. IF THE PAY DISPUTE DRAGS ON, FURTHER EFFORTS BY THE WORKERS TO DRAMATIZE THE SITUATION CAN BE EXPECTED. NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE, HOWEVER, AND BOTH MOD AND UNION SOURCES SEEM CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT SOME SORT OF ACCORD CAN BE REACHED.

BREWSTER

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